

Machinery will come, as we said before, but we shall welcome it as a servant. Let the masons become carvers and statuaries, as the increase of enriched masons' work promises to promote, and as their education and advancement in life require it, then the machine to do the drudging, toilsome, slavish work may be acceptable; but now, we do protest, it is out of time and out of place, and, as we are well assured, the result of a struggle for individual aggrandisement and elevation, rather than that of a legitimate demand. It is not, however, the working masons alone who are to suffer by such competition as this we mention, but it is the great bulk of their employers also, the shopkeepers with whom they deal, and the landlords whose houses they inhabit; but there comes worse than all this, and we who have paid great attention to these matters, know tolerably well how to value it; when dearth of employment ensues and with it a reduction of wages, then we have struggles, strikes, devastation, devastation we mean in the homes and hearts of the thousands—non-employment, waste of goods to sustain through that period, waste of health, waste of morals; children, the seed of another generation, neglected and corrupted, untaught, or if taught, how taught? and what vice exposed to! wives pinched of means of household comfort, driven to the selling their household goods, clothes, and so on, never more perhaps to recruit; degenerate for ever. This is no picture of the imagination, it is a severe historical truth, and drawn from recent scenes and sources—oh! we pray that these may never be enacted over again, and we implore our good countrymen of the North—the North of all places, the land of masons!—we implore them to contrive any thing but machines that are not wanted, or if they will contrive such, to sit down before they introduce them to contrive machinery to create a demand.

Again, we repeat, that this subject has not been sought, but coming before us as it has, we have not shrunk from handling it; we trust, however, that we have done it in a becoming spirit, however feebly and unworthily, and we hope that all others who do handle it will make us feel our inferiority of motive and of purpose as much or more than our want of ability.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—In yours of the 14th inst. there appeared an article on the new "Patent Iron Mason," and as I am one of the old horse and mackie kind, you will perhaps allow me to say a few words about our new rival; he is, if I may credit your account, one of a formidable character. Does he belong to the nation? you do not say; but, as you promise something more of him in your next, you will forgive this my question. But, Mr. Editor, joking apart, upon seeing the article in question, I commenced reading it attentively, and the more I read the humanity of your remarks does you great credit. I am no alarmist at machinery in any branch, and quite agree with you when you say "that England owes a great deal of what is called greatness, and an unbounded deal of wealth, to machinery;" yet, with all this pronounced opinion, where the shoe pinches individually, theoretical notions are sunk to give realness a place. This was particularly the case with me on reading your article—as I went on I saw our bread taken compassedly from us by this iron invader, and our famed independence of spirit melt away, and give place to pauperised servility; my head grew giddy, and my eyes dim with moisture; I mechanically turned them towards the wife of my bosom, and our helpless little ones, for they all stood around me, thunderstruck to see me in such a strange mood; my wife first broke silence by saying, "What ails you now, Willie?" (for despite her being so young in the north, she is still the same unpretentious, warm-hearted woman as when I first met her "on the margin of Carlisle"). I was silent for a while, for I could not speak; at last in broken accents I told her all—how we were ruined by steam and his giant hand of iron—how they were working masters by the acre and columns by the mile, and that 160, 300 per cent. cheaper than us. "I will build my home, my mallets to-morrow, that you may set the fire with them, and my chisels I will sell to some lucky engineer, and then go learn another trade." Shaking her head and looking ruefully at me, she said, "Your own said for that too, am I not?" "Can ye as ye have been, and strike me?" "For my sin part I am willing to suffer a rather than this stuff I should come over us." "No," she said, "I grant you that I am rather slow to learn another trade, and I thank you for the devotion you show for the honour of mine."

I am proud of my trade, and should not like to see it usurped by this iron impostor; nevertheless we have all seen too much of this kind of strikes to wish to abolish it in that way, that would just give an impetus to the invention. "God preserve us, the man's craft; what are gains to do, then? yeer was more than ye wis when they invented the machine for facing the Abrothst pavilion on the Craig Leith; mabe this may turn out like them." "Ye are right, guide wife, this is drommy sort of work; it may turn out like them, or 'Old Nick' at Hartlepool." "Or Nelson's, at Glasgow," suggested she; "but how ye read it a's? I thought this new-fangled newspaper was to be the workman's friend, and now its turn 'out his backside face.'" "I have not read it all," said I, "so patience, and I will read the rest aloud to ye," added I, by way of parenthesis, "you should not be so hard upon *THE BUILDER*, he is generous and feeling." I then commenced, and read on to the end; but as I proceeded, I could not help now and then taking a straitly look at my wife, her features gradually relaxing from that of stern defiance to their usual placid and good-humoured aspect. I was certainly not less pleased than her when, upon concluding the article, I found it entirely related to the machine lately erected in Woodside Quarry. I am grieved that you did not, before writing this article and sending it forth to your many readers, endeavour to gain some more correct information relative to this machine, and its probable success. It is now something like eighteen months since its erection, and during that time it has made no progress, not having worked a single stone that has been put into an exposed part of any building, either back or front; what little it has done has been put into the foundations of the "county buildings" now in course of erection, and it is worth remarking, that when the contract was let, Mr. Nelson calculated doing the greater part of it with the "Iron Mason," but so unprofitable, and of course impracticable, has he found it, that he has long ago laid it aside, and is working all the stuff by hand,—indeed, it is my opinion that it does not do the work as well as "Old Nick," for many of the stones that came to the foundations of the county buildings, were far from being "out of joint," some of them on a surface of five feet square, winding nearly one inch. So much for "its greater accuracy." To a practical mason his non-success is obvious. We all know the unequal nature of all kinds of stone; it is also known that where a soft part occurs, it is always surrounded by one of a harder quality, and here it requires the greatest care to prevent it from "pinching," or jumping out in holes. The mason tempers his blow here; but the machine knows only one pace, and the result is holes to go deeper in to lose time, stone, and still get the same result. When this is the case with the face of a stone, it is more so with the bed, where they have to keep a good "arrise." I could point out many more causes for the failure of the "Iron Mason," such as the difficulty of moving stones about the tools used, and of cutting them after being worked, the migratory character of building, &c. &c. I may return to them again, with your permission, but at present my letter has outgrown my original intentions. I shall trust to your promised impartiality for the insertion of this in next *BUILDER*. I remain yours,

A PRACTICAL MASON.

28, Upper Ebury-street, Pimlico.

We insert the letter of a practical mason entire, not caring to curtail or correct it, the matter being so much to the point; and we are glad to take occasion to advert to the common error, which is, and has been, the foundation of so much mischief amongst what are called practical men. Now a practical man is not what is usually understood by the term,—to be a practical man for the discussion of such a question as this, it is not sufficient to know the nature of stone alone, or of the circumstances under which it is at present used and worked; but he must also know a good deal about machinery; he must be a master of both sides of the question. We are always tempted to take on very light trust what are called the opinions of practical men, where an element new to them, and in which, of course, they are unpractical, if we may be allowed the term, is involved. We have seen too much of it; practical men, judging in these matters, have in almost every case misled themselves and others. We remember the time when saw-mills were introduced, and practical sawyers first laughed at it; they spoke as our friend the practical mason speaks, of the knots in timber, of the various qualities, of the necessity of tempering the hand, of the difficulties in regard of their tools, of the migratory character of building, &c. &c.; and they enjoined themselves on the first imperfect and unprofitable workings of the saw machines. What do

they say to it now? But sawyers were by no means so numerous a body, and their calling not so difficult to be skilled in as masons, and therefore the injury which they suffered was trivial as compared with that which is to be apprehended in the present case. The same was formerly said of applying machinery to marble working—aye, and to every other application of it to purposes interfering with human industry.

Now we take leave to say, knowing a little about work as well as about machinery, that there is no difficulty, among the many suggested by the practical mason, that machinery cannot overcome. Why machinery, as Lord Brougham once said of the steam-engine, will weave you a cable, or spin a thread of the finest gossamer, forge an anchor, or a lady's delicate toilet pin. What, for instance, could have been supposed more difficult, than to invent a machine to set and compose for the printing press, or one to perform the operation of printing; yet all this is done and can be done and improved without limit, except such as bound the imagination and invention of man. No, no, we tell our friend, and through him, all practical masons, that the worst species of confidence is blind confidence; taking the flattering unctious to our souls, that because we see difficulties of this, that, and another sort, others, standing in a totally different point for viewing the matter, see or are beset by the same difficulties. "Practical men" have shook their heads at every thing; at railways, at gas, at steam, at magnetism, at every thing in which they were inexperienced; until all the world was convinced, they refused to be. However, we should be committing a folly on the other hand if we sought to alarm; we only wish to awaken. There is, as we have said in the article referring to the "Iron Mason," of this week, nothing to be dreaded except from apathy. Upon such, and upon such alone, descends "the thief in the night."

THE ENTHUSIAST.

No. II.

ENTHUSIAST is not brought before our readers on this occasion to encross any considerable share of their attention, but we would arrest him in passing, to sketch another feature of his peculiar character; and though it may not please him largely, we have our charter to deal with him as we list,—besides there is a moral involved in all he does, or is the subject of, a something to avoid, if not to imitate, and if he seldom goes right, he is not unfrequently a warning to others; and so of no little service in his way; frequently he is like the guide-post, pointing the way correctly, but not taking it himself.

He consoles himself strangely enough in this, as his friends term it, his misfortune. If he makes an experiment or speculates in some new track, he is occasionally unsuccessful, and is sure to be rattled soundly for "his folly"—all the good he accomplishes in his well-posed and most successful aims, and it is sometimes of no small amount, is forgotten. In some petty failure, and he wants the audacity and thick-skinned assurance to defend and excuse himself; he consoles himself, however, by this reflection, that his failure has purchased wisdom, absolute wisdom, for others—and so, says he, "I have lived another day to another useful purpose, if only as a beacon to warn the future adventurer."

But we were going to paint another feature, and it is one that causes him considerable uneasiness. Not that he is so absurdly, we had almost said wickedly, sensitive, as to be like a deceased noble peer in respect of his deformed or club foot, but Enthusiast has a hunch on his back, which his friends share in the folly of objecting to more than he does himself; indeed, he is very bumble and resigned concerning it so far as regards himself, but if it mortally or causes an annoyance to a friend, he is then truly uneasy. It is then he may be heard exclaiming, "Would that I could be rid of this deformity; it stands in the way of my more favourable reception in life!"—and he bears it now and then observed, "Dear, what a pity it is, that Enthusiast should have so much to detract from his personal appearance; he is handsome, clever, agreeable, and obliging, but that ugly hunch on his back,